

Best Business Practices (19/05/17)

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3 Best Practices For Effective Business Networking

Businesses have a love-hate relationship with networking: It takes time and effort, but it can also beget some great rewards. Here are three ways to keep your company on top of its networking game.



[IMAGE: FLICKR USER [JAMES LEE](#)]

BY SOPHIE-CHARLOTTE MOATTI 4 MINUTE READ

Business networking is essentially marketing ourselves to our professional community.

In my 10+ years in Silicon Valley, I've given dozens of talks on networking and leadership to Stanford University graduate students and to business executives at the Watermark Leadership Conference and LeeHechtHarrison Executive Workshops, just to name a few. Most of the questions I typically get fall in two categories: "I need to network more, but I hate doing it. How do I make it work for me?" and "I love networking but it takes too much time, how do I prioritize?"

Networking is an art, not a science, and it's hard to measure—or even define—its effectiveness. So we often have a love-hate relationship with it. Thankfully, there are ways to network effectively. Here are best practices for three common situations: at an event, online, and with mentors.

BEST PRACTICE #1: NEVER LEAVE AN EVENT WITHOUT A SECOND DATE.

Sharing our point of view about current trends in our industry at an event could get us this new client, or that next job, or nothing but glory. But when given the opportunity, most of us will welcome the exposure and give it our best shot. The effectiveness of offline networking is hard to measure, so how do we know when we've succeeded? Never leave without a second date.

When going to an event, it can be intimidating to enter a room full of professionals we don't know. The most effective way to get a second date is to sample the crowd quickly until we find someone datable. To get started, we use simple ice breakers such as asking someone why they chose to come to the event or what they hope to get out of it. If the person isn't a fit, we proceed to move on politely and repeat until we find someone we're interested in. We may or may not have the chance to spend as much time with that person as we'd like, and that's whom we ask on a second date.

BEST PRACTICE #2: COMMIT A FEW HOURS A WEEK TO SOCIAL NETWORKING.

One hour a week: This is the smallest amount of time any of us needs to spend consuming social networks: scanning business news almost every morning, attending an industry conference about once a year, and responding to an invitation to connect about once a month. Remember to look people up on social networks before meeting them (LinkedIn + Twitter + their company website at a minimum) and to send a brief follow up note afterward.

Four hours a week: In this amount of time, we can contribute actively to our business community with social networking activities like sharing relevant business articles every day, organizing a monthly networking event or arranging for a speaker to come to our workplace, and initiating a weekly 1:1 networking lunch.

One day a week: By making this commitment to social networking, we set out to significantly raise our profile in our business community to that of a thought leader by: writing one opinion piece a month and getting it published on prominent industry blogs, giving talks monthly at industry events, and making connections within our network that have the potential to turn into win-win business partnerships.

BEST PRACTICE #3: NURTURE 5 TO 10 STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS.

Integrating online and offline networking can be an effective way to build tight relationships with a select group of professionals, who could become our mentors. This approach is most effective when limited to the 5 to 10 strategic relationships we care to cultivate. Focus on these and be guilt-free about the other 500+ we could also nurture.

What matters most in building relationship is the frequency and quality of the interaction, not the length of time spent. To maximize frequency, make sure to keep in touch regularly by forwarding a relevant article or a quick update on some new career development. If concerned about spamming them, ask if they found the article/note useful. As for quality, the professionals we pick as our champions are likely busy, so will be grateful to us if we save them time. Before reaching out to them, be clear about what to ask them. Then decide whether face time is needed, or if an email, or a phone call will do the job.

Whether we spend one, four, or eight hours a week networking, we can make this time productive and feel good about our networking. So, please keep in touch!

—**Sophie-Charlotte Moatti** has created mobile services that are used by billions of people and have won industry awards such as Emmy nominations. Prior to joining Facebook, she successfully sold the mobile company she founded and was general manager of a top 1% mobile commerce app at Nokia. She has a Stanford MBA and an MS in electrical engineering. She frequently speaks on mobile, social networks, innovation and leadership (CTIA, Commerce World, Stanford, Watermark) Follow @scmoatti.